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COORDINATION AND POLICY APPROVAL OF COVERT OPERATIONS

NSC Declassification/Release Instructions on File

A. Historical Evolution

1. The first formal authority for what is now called "covert action" in the post-World War II era was the National Security Council (NSC) directive NSC 4-A, which was approved on 19 December 1947. Without elaborating coordination procedures, it directed the Director of Central Intelligence to undertake covert action and to assure that the resulting operations were consistent with U.S. policy. The DCI was to ensure through liaison with State and Defense that operations were consistent with U.S. policy.

2. NSC 4-A was refined and superseded by the issuance on 19 June 1948 of a new NSC directive, NSC 10/2. This defined more clearly the aims and methods of covert action and spelled out with more precision the procedures for ensuring that covert operations conducted under it were consistent with U.S. foreign and military policies. "Designated representatives" of the Secretaries of State and Defense comprised the "Senior Consultants," or "10/2 Panel," which included civilian representatives of State and Defense and a military representative of the JSC. These Senior Consultants met with the Assistant Director for Policy Coordination, the CIA office responsible at that time for planning and conducting covert operations, and reviewed proposed new covert projects to be conducted by CIA.

3. NSC 10/2 was further refined and superseded by the issuance on 31 October 1951 of NSC directive NSC 10/5. This new directive authorized an expansion of world-wide covert operations and changed policy coordination procedures. The Psychological Strategy Board, which had been established on 4 April 1951, was charged with determining the "feasibility and feasibility" of proposed covert programs and major covert projects. A new and expanded "10/5 Panel" was established, comprising the members of the earlier 10/2 Panel but adding staff representatives of the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). It functioned much as the 10/2 Panel had, but the resulting procedures proved cumbersome and potentially insecure. Accordingly, when the PSB was replaced by the Operations Coordination Board (OCB) on 7 September 1953, coordination of covert operations reverted to a smaller group identical with the former 10/2 Panel, without OCB staff participation.

4. There subsequently was some retrogression toward the broader 10/2 Panel principle. On 15 March 1954, the issuance of NSC 5412, which superseded NSC 10/5, required that the DCI consult with the OCB and with

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Naturalitory action programme.

NSA clandestine and covert action names in U.S. Central Intelligence Defense Pipe.

The last section also dealt with those requiring recommendation to the Special Group: where there is need for a new policy determination or to reaffirm the previous policy decisions; when developments or changes are such as to make the subject a matter for re-examination by the Group; and if specifically required by the Special Group is its approval of the program or activity.

5. These criteria have remained unchanged in subsequent CIA internal directives.

C. Comparative Numerical Approvals of CIA Proposals

1. Statistical reflection of the action of approval authority on CIA programs early in its life are difficult to offer on a comparative basis because of the steady refinement of "programs" into individual "projects", but the best recapitulation available shows:

b. Projects approved by DCI on informal authority:

b. Projects approved by DCI in coordination with Operations Coordination Board or Psychological Strategy Board:

¹ See also the discussion of the "moral economy" in the section "Economic and Social Structure."

c. Projects approved or reaffirmed by Operations Coordination Board, the Special Group or 103 Committee:

Eisenhower Administration 104

Kennedy Administration 163

Johanna Administration 142

(March 1955 - February 1967)

2. As the sophistication of the policy approval process developed so did the participation of the external approving authority. Since establishment of the Special Group (later 303 Committees), the policy advisers have questioned CIA presentations, amended them and, on occasion, denied them outright. The record shows that the Group/Committee, in some instances, has over-ridden objections from the DCI and instructed

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D. Special Briefings

1. Bureau of the Budget

a. Because of the judgments necessary in budget for covert action operations, Bureau of the Budget (BOB) officials may sometimes attend meetings of the Special Group (or 301 Committee) and participate in review discussions. For example, at a special meeting of the Special Group on 12 December 1963, requested by BOB, SCOB participants were Messrs. Gordon, Staats, Hanson, and Arney. The minutes of this meeting reflect that the BOB officials participated fully in discussions concerning covert action programs and activities in each area of the world. They heard the Agency's presentations

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